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RECOLLECTIONS

OF

RICHARD PIGOTT.

BY

JAMES O'CONNOR.

DUBLIN

M. H. GILL AND SON

O'CONNELL STREET

1889

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PREFACE.



It might with truth be said, that no one could surpass Richard Pigott in painting his own portrait, as he did in his discovered correspondence, and in his cross-examination by Sir Charles Russell at the London Commission. But it occurred to me that public curiosity would not be satisfied until something more was known of his habits and character during those years when he was apparently a respectable citizen of Dublin, occupying a rather prominent position in connection with National journalism. To meet this desire I publish these random recollections of a man who, in many respects, was as inscrutable a personage as "The Man in the Iron Mask."

J. O'CONNOR.

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RECOLLECTIONS OF RICHARD PIGOTT.

RICHARD PIGOTT was the son of the late George Pigott, of whose origin nothing is known beyond the tradition that he was born in the County Meath. Ratoath has been mentioned as the place of his birth, and in all probability the surmise is correct. Pigott, senior, was for many years a clerk in the office of the *Tablet*, of which Frederick Lucas was editor and proprietor. He had also been employed by Peter Purcell, of Dublin, who held the contract for the transmission of the mails to the provinces. After the death of Mr. Purcell, or after he had lost the contract, Pigott's father got employment in the office of the *Monitor*, which was published in Lower Abbey Street.

In 1842, the *Nation* was established, and was issued from the premises of the deceased *Monitor*. Here Richard Pigott made his first appearance as an office boy, employed to address covers and to run errands. Some years subsequently, the hopeful youngster got an engagement in the commercial department of the *Ulsterman*, a national journal started in Belfast by the late Denis Holland. It is related by a gentleman intimately acquainted with Denis Holland, that when Pigott was in the *Ulsterman* office, he was able occasionally to lend

his employer small sums of money, Denis Holland, being at the time, and throughout his life, a careless business man, irregular in his habits, and quite heedless as to his pecuniary circumstances.

While Richard Pigott was in Belfast, he began to develop those propensities for joyous living which, in later years, grew into a passion that absorbed his leisure hours, and tenaciously adhered to him up to an advanced age in life. His taste for pleasure was keen and precocious, and even in his youth he did not seem troubled with a moral conscience.

The *Ulsterman* was not very long in existence when it was suggested to Holland, that he should change the name of his paper to the *Irishman*. At the instance of John Edward Pigott, a prominent young Irishman, and son of the late Chief Baron Pigott (no relation whatever of the famous forger), Holland shifted the *Irishman* from Belfast to Dublin. The removal took place in 1859.

With the *Irishman*, Denis Holland brought Richard Pigott to Dublin; gave him full charge of his books and his cash; left him, in fact, complete master of the business department of his paper. At this time (1859) Pigott did not confine his industry to the *Irishman* office. Piles of old invoices from London houses are extant, showing that thirty years ago he did a considerable trade in photographs, stereoscopic lenses, &c., turning over many hundreds a year.

Denis Holland's father-in-law was a Mr. Watson, of Belfast, a shrewd trader, who had made money, and who parted with £3,000 in order to establish his son-in-law as a newspaper proprietor. When Mr. Watson found that his daughter's dowry was melting away under the genial carelessness of Mr. Holland, he applied his wits to discover whether the *Irishman* was a paying or a losing enterprise. It is evidence of his northern astuteness, that he fixed a suspicious eye upon Richard Pigott. He turned over the leaves of the cash-book, and did not like the look of the accounts.

Immediately, he wrote to Strabane for a man named Monahan, whom he placed in charge of the office, reducing Pigott to a subordinate position. But Monahan became dissipated and negligent. At this time there was no regular set of books; there was no safe; none of the appointments required in a well-ordered business concern. The following anecdote is an illustration of Monahan's fitness for the management of a paper, and an early manifestation of Pigott's idea as to the proper destination of any money that might pass through his hands:—

"I say, Pigott," said Monahan one day, "where used you to put the cash? There is no cash-box here."

"By Jove," replied Pigott, "I always put it in my pocket."

My informant heard this dialogue, and can vouch for Pigott's unwitting testimony to a feature of his

character which became more striking as he increased in years. Pigott was eager to put money in his purse, but it does not appear that he was able to keep it there very long.

MR. P. J. SMYTH.—THE *IRISHMAN*.

About the month of June, 1865, a fortune fell into Pigott's lap. A few years previous to this date Denis Holland sold the *Irishman* to P. J. Smyth. It need hardly be stated that Mr. Smyth had always been a crotchety sort of politician, never satisfied with anything or anybody. Even his friend, John Mitchel, thought so little of Mr. Smyth's usefulness as a public man that he once said to the writer: "Ah, you'll never make anything out of Paddy Smyth." And for the same reason that John Mitchel had in his mind, P. J. Smyth never made anything out of the *Irishman*.

He had able contributors to its leading columns, amongst the trenchant and attractive writers being Dr. Sigerson and John Edward Pigott. While Denis Holland was proprietor of the *Irishman* it was the organ of the extreme and active National party. But no sooner had P. J. Smyth taken the driving-seat than the principles of the paper began to run zig-zag, without any definite end or object in view. The Fenian party turned from it with contempt, and started the *Irish People* in Nov. 1863. This was the final blow to P. J. Smyth's *Irishman*.

HOW THE *IRISHMAN* BECAME PIGOTT'S PROPERTY.

In the middle of the year 1865, P. J. Smyth told Pigott, his cashier and book-keeper, that he would lose no more money on the concern, and if he wished to try his hand at newspaper proprietorship he would make him a present of the plant, type, machinery, debts and all. The debts did not reach £700, but Mr. Smyth, seeing no hope of recovering that amount, and being constitutionally fickle, got tired of the venture, and walked out of 33 Lr. Abbey-street, leaving Pigott in possession. I have heard it stated that Pigott agreed to pay P. J. Smyth £650 for the concern, and that Pigott characteristically wriggled out of the agreement, but I cannot vouch for the truth of this assertion. At all events, in June, 1865, Pigott became sole owner of the *Irishman*, and on the 15th of September in the same year the suppression of the *Irish People* placed a fortune in his hands.

THE USE HE MADE OF HIS LUCK.

The arrest of the *Irish People* staff, and of hundreds of Fenians all over the country, from Antrim to Cork, raised the circulation of the *Irishman* from a few thousand to fifty thousand a week. As the extent of the organisation became revealed by the discovery of documents, the excitement and alarm increased throughout Great Britain and Ireland. From '65 to '69, the *Irishman* was crammed with Fenian news, and its lead-

ing articles were vigorously and boldly written (not, of course, by Pigott) in defence of the prisoners and of the revolutionary movement.

HIS POPULARITY.

Being the proprietor of the paper, Pigott was the *Irishman*, and the *Irishman* was Pigott. His popularity ran up like the circulation of his paper. Had he the gifts and the virtues that qualify for leadership, a bright and honourable career was at his command. After his prosecution and imprisonment for a remarkably able article ("The Holocaust"), written upon the subject of the Manchester executions, his popularity attained its highest point. But he had neither the intellect nor the inclination to sway the public mind, nor the patriotism to render unselfish service to his country. Cunning he had in abundance, and resourceful ingenuity in plenty; but these are only instincts, and are as common to the fox and the monkey as they are to men of Pigott's type. Ernest Rénan's description of primitive humanity very closely fits Richard Pigott: "We must assume primitive humanity to have been very malevolent. The chief characteristics of man for many centuries were craft, a refinement of cunning, &c."

Pigott's malevolence was strikingly exhibited in his cross-examination, and particularly in his correspondence with the late Mr. Forster. Having extracted a considerable sum of money from the deceased Chief Secretary, he threatened to injure and discredit his

benefactor by publishing the correspondence. His craft and refinement of cunning have been sufficiently displayed in his plots, and stratagems, and forgeries. These being his inclinations, he had no desire to turn his prosperity and his popularity to any good or useful purpose.

HIS INCOME.

It has been calculated that for some years his income averaged £2,000 a year. He had three papers, all issued from the same office, and they were produced upon the sharpest principles of economy. His attention to business was close, constant, and watchful. What did he do with his profits? He was always in financial straits, and always at his wits' ends to find means of getting out of them. His habits and tastes supply grounds for the inference that he could spend a large income. At home and abroad he lived expensively. His companions and his society were gayest of the gay. He did not associate with politicians, journalists, or serious men. It was a narrow circle he moved in. Between the theatres and the Model Yacht Club he spent his leisure hours, and freely spent his money. But when he wanted cash he did not spare his chums, for I have recently heard that some of them had to pay dearly for his suppers and champagne.

THE DECLINE OF THE "IRISHMAN."

The origin of the quarrel between Pigott and the late A. M. Sullivan I am not acquainted with, as I was

beyond the reach of newspapers when the rupture occurred, and I have never taken the trouble to inquire into the cause. I only know that Pigott came out of the dispute badly mauled and damaged. After that controversy, the Fenian excitement of the previous years having subsided, the circulation of the *Irishman* and *Flag of Ireland* (which Pigott started in '67 or '68) began to fail. At the same time it was bruited about that Pigott had played fast and loose with public funds passing through his office, notably the Ladies' Committee Fund, subscribed for the support of the Fenian prisoners' families.

Public confidence in Pigott was gradually withdrawn, and a vague suspicion of his infirmity in regard to money matters was taking possession of his readers. Yet, for a long time, the suspicion did not go beyond the conclusion that his appropriations were temporary, and that under stress of circumstances he yielded to the temptation to make use of funds given to him in trust. But, it appears that while his income was diminishing his expenditure was not curtailed. He had been accustomed to extravagance, and could not shake it off. Although twice he carried private arrangements with his creditors on favourable terms, his debts were ever and ever increasing. When his profits were reduced to a few hundreds a year, he lived at the same high speed as when they were a couple of thousand.

OFFERS TO SELL.

It must have been anterior to this period of his history that Pigott began to draw upon the resources of his versatile ingenuity. Besides his appropriation of trust funds, the amount of which cannot be ascertained, recent discoveries show that he had been trading upon forged bills of exchange and promissory notes. The Home Rule movement, initiated in 1870, and finally shaped at the Convention of 1873, was exploited by Pigott in his own peculiar way. It was no unusual thing to read in his papers one paragraph adversely criticising Home Rule proceedings, and in another column might be seen a friendly support of the movement.

The Home Rulers felt that Pigott was an ugly obstacle in their path. Negotiations for sale or subsidy were opened with Mr. Butt and Mr. Patrick Egan, and some bargain was struck, the particulars of which I am unable to give. But it appears that an agreement for sale was signed, and Pigott received a considerable instalment on account. The sale was never completed, nor, of course, was the money returned. Pigott had previously agreed to sell to other parties, and received a large sum in advance of the purchase. On some pretence or other, he withdrew from the contract, but I need hardly say that he did not refund the cash advanced. This sale trick served his purpose on two occasions, and helped him to go on living merrily from hand to mouth.

The third time, however, he was taken at his word, and pinned to it. Mr. Patrick Egan came to know Mr. Richard Pigott's character better than any man in Dublin knew it. The time had come to remove Mr. Pigott, but not in the way that James Carey signified by the use of the word. Pigott should be offered a liberal price for his paper, and the offer was so liberal that he could not refuse it. His concern was not worth a fourth of the money; but he had been a great trouble to the National parties, and it was more merciful to buy him out and get rid of him than to start a National paper, which would be sure to beggar his business. However, Pigott did not get another chance of repeating the sale trick. When all the legal formalities were complete he received his money, and thus parted with a property which good fortune had placed in his hands, and which he might have preserved intact and prosperous to the end of his life.

AN ERRONEOUS IMPRESSION.

It has been stated, chiefly by Pigott himself, that an unfair advantage had been taken of his difficulties; that he had been forced to sell by putting pressure upon his mortgagees. This is quite untrue. But as some people seem to have given credence to the statement, it is necessary to relate the facts. The sale was not perfected by pressure of any kind. It was absolutely voluntary on his part. He was so well pleased with the amount of the purchase money that

he boasted to one of his private friends of the satisfactory bargain he had made. But for certain purposes, Pigott circulated the accusation that he had been reduced by undue pressure to the alternative of bankruptcy or sale.

The Forster correspondence, read at the Commission, revealed the fact that by the use of this complaint he moved the sympathy of the Chief Secretary of 1881. Neither was it true that after paying his debts out of the purchase money he was penniless. He had at least a thousand pounds clear for himself. Within a week after he put this sum in his pocket, he was appealing *in formâ pauperis* to the benevolence of Mr. W. E. Forster. This is one of the singular characteristics of the unfortunate man, one of the many strange ways which make it so difficult to understand him.

PIGOTT AS A PENMAN.

Pigott's writing was small and neat. As an accountant he was expert at figures, and could make out a specious balance-sheet that would meet all the requirements of a bubble company. Though he soon learned to write for his papers, he was not a literary man, and had no literary tastes or talents. His mind was distinctly commercial, and had he probity along with his capacity for office work, he might have been a great success in business. His skill in writing different hands, and his cleverness in imitating signatures, became

known by degrees to his cashiers. Even they had but scant evidence of his ever having made bad use of his adroitness. So secret was he, that his left hand did not know what his right was doing. He kept his mind strictly to himself; never communicated a syllable to anyone unless when his purpose required it. For instance, none of his employés were aware that he had sold his papers until the bargain had been broken off, or completed. If Pigott was for years trading in forged bills, as it now appears that he was beyond all doubt, his cashier was then unable to discover that fact, because Pigott held the key of his letter-box, and opened all his correspondence. The clerk might be sent with bills and cheques to lodge in bank. Some or all of the bills might be forged acceptances, but the clerk could not distinguish the spurious from the genuine signature, though he might be well acquainted with the latter. Pigott evaded detection by the very simple precaution of lifting the bills before they were due.

PIGOTT'S HANDWRITING.

Mr. Pigott had a large correspondence with Messrs. Fletcher Bros., Nassau-street, in reference to bicycles he purchased for his boys in Clongowes College. The following *fac simile* of a letter, which I picked out from about twenty that were shown to me, is a fair specimen of his undisguised handwriting; and it is at the same time an evidence of his paternal indulgence towards his children.

11 Sandy Cove Avenue West
Kingstown, Dec^r 18th 1888

Dear Sir

I will call next day I am in town
to make for a payment. I would
send for a cheque if I did not happen
to have a cheque book at hand.

There is no doubt that the Bicycle
was sent from Clongames last
Thursday. Perhaps you would kindly
send again to King's Bridge for it, and
if it is not then ask them to wire to
Salmon about it - Charging me with
expense.

It is the Bicycle that is to be repainted
or remanured and not the Bicycle as
you seem to think. The Bicycle I
understood from you is now all right
and ready to be delivered when my
son comes home

Faithfully

Rich^d Fyfe

Wm. Fletcher Esq

The following letter (in fac-simile) is characteristic
of Pigott's pecuniary straits and difficulties:—

'Irishman,' 'Flag of Ireland,' & 'Shamrock.'

Offices:

33, LOWER ABBEY-ST.

DUBLIN, June 9 18 87

Dear Sir

I must ask you to be good enough
to give me a few days longer time to pay
the Rent due to Mrs. Carolan. I have
got unexpectedly into difficulties & am negoti-
-ating about to find them which will
be arranged in a few days. I am aware
that I have treated Mrs. Carolan badly,
inasmuch as I made her frequent promises
which I was unable to keep. but as she
has waited so long I can't ask her to
wait a little longer. Law proceedings taken
against me now might have the effect of
compelling me to seek protection from the
Court of Bankruptcy & that I need not tell
you would indefinitely delay the payment of
the Rent.

I am

Yours truly
Richd. Pigott

J. Gifford Esq.

PIGOTT'S FIGURES.

In reference to the forged letters purchased by the *Times*, Pigott's figures are particularly interesting. The forged letters which were alleged to be the most incriminatory were dated "15/5/'82, and "9/1/'82." These were signed with Mr. Parnell's name. The following is a copy of the first:—

15/5/'82.

DEAR SIR,—I am not surprised at your friend's anger, but he and you should know that to denounce the murders was the only course open to us. To do that promptly was plainly our best policy.

But you can tell him and all others concerned, that though I regret the accident of Lord F. Cavendish's death, I cannot refuse to admit that Bourke got no more than his deserts.

You are at liberty to show him this, and others whom you can trust also, but let not my address be known. He can write to House of Commons.

Yours very truly,

CHAS. S. PARNELL.

The letter dated "9/1/'82," need not be repeated here. It was the communication supposed to have been written by Mr. Parnell while in Kilmainham Jail—the letter in which the writer asked "what are your friends doing?" and "you promised to make it hot for old Forster." Although in those letters Pigott, with considerable success, disguised his hand-writing, he quite forgot to change the character of his figures. The perfect identity of the figures in the *fac-simile* published by the *Times* with the figures in the following *fac-simile* from an old account-book in Pigott's

writing will be apparent to any one who is in a position to compare them. The figures, 5, 8, 9, 1 and 2 will suffice for the comparison.

1863

April 30	} By Goods	—	£	
May 31		do	—	
June 30	do	—		90. 11. 2
July 31	do	—		32. 16. 1
Aug 31	do	—		30. 18. 0
Sept 30	do	—		38. 13. 5
Oct 31	do	—		32. 19. 2
Nov 30	do	—		~~40~~ . 1. 2
Dec 31	do	—		37. 10. 2
by	do	—		44. 8. 5
Jan 31	do	—		29. 0. 8
				376. 18. 3
264. 3. 8				

112. 15. 7 balu

A FATAL PROPENSITY.

Pigott's facility of penmanship was fatal to him in more ways than one. Besides its suggestion to imitate handwriting and forge signatures, it led him into a

voluminous correspondence with everybody. When evidence of his writing was required, letters in hundreds were available from all parts and from various classes of people. He could not transact the simplest business without filling sheets of note-paper about it, especially upon subjects of dispute or unpleasantness. He would rather write twenty letters than come to a personal understanding. He was certainly afflicted with the *cacoethes scribendi*. He could not keep his pen off the paper.

While he was under cross-examination at the Commission Court, he was dazed, stupified, and overwhelmed by the bulk of his correspondence with the late Mr. Forster, and with his Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Walsh, and Mr. Patrick Egan. Even then, in the witness-box, his old instinct held fast grip of him, his involuntary motions on the desk, with a quill pen in his hand, having struck the audience as a remarkable instance of the power of habit. As Sir Charles Russell was driving him from corner to corner, the confused witness continued scratching away on the ledge before him, as though he were practising for some fresh forgery to sell to Mr. Houston and the *Times*.

ANONYMOUS LETTERS.

One of Pigott's odd fancies was writing anonymous letters to himself, or to others, as his purpose needed. This practice recoiled upon him while he was under Sir

Charles Russell's cross-examination, and it had nearly proved a serious matter to one of his clerks some years before Pigott was bought out of Irish journalism. He received an anonymous letter (written, of course, by himself), accusing his cashier of having been heard making grave charges against Mr. Pigott's character. It was a pure fabrication—the suspicion of a guilty conscience. The cashier attributed the letter to a clerk in the office, with whose family Pigott was very intimate. The result was a quarrel between two innocent persons, the weaker one narrowly escaping from the vengeance of the stronger. If Pigott suspected any of his boon companions of harbouring sinister impressions regarding his course of life, the anonymous letter trick was sure to be played on him also. When, in 1881, he wanted to squeeze money out of Mr. P. Egan, he fabricated an anonymous communication offering £500 for the publication of a Land League account of moneys received and expended. And Archbishop Walsh was the recipient of an anonymous letter to the effect, that the Rev. Canon Craig had been endeavouring to take advantage of Mr. Pigott's distress by trying to proselytise his children. While he was engaged for the *Times* he did not forget the practice of anonymous confidence.

PIGOTT AS A PHOTOGRAPHER.

It has come to light that so far back as thirty years ago Pigott had a photographic apparatus. Whether

his versatile genius was successful in striking likenesses I cannot say; but that he did a considerable business in photography is now known to be a matter of fact. It has also been ascertained that his trade in pictures of every description—engravings, lithographs, woodcuts, &c.—was not of the purest character. He bought them and sold them, and the more curious they were the more precious in his sight. Some of his correspondents in this singular traffic have been unearthed. Rare books were as valuable to him as rare pictures. It was in the name of “Mr. Greene” that he conducted this business. His closest companions, at this period of his life, had no suspicion of his occupation as a dealer in unsightly pictures. But this feature of Pigott’s character is one that had better be briefly dismissed.

A CONTRAST.

Although he had no literary talent, he had a good library of valuable and well-bound works of standard literature, and spent, from time to time, a large amount of money in the purchase of handsome volumes. There were many contradictions in his character—not an unusual thing in the best of men, as in the worst—and the books he selected for his home shelves were pure and high-toned, all of the most distinguished authors. Moral taste may not be identical with moral conscience; but the one can hardly exist where the other is not. Pigott’s evidence showed that of moral

conscience he had not an atom. Of immoral taste he had abundance, proof of which has lately been discovered; yet, in his home there was a contrast in his select collection of literature. It may, however, be said that this was for the eyes of friends and visitors.

MANNER AND TEMPERAMENT.

Pigott was one of those men whom people would set down, in a general description, as retiring, unobtrusive, unaggressive, and inoffensive. He lacked "go," apparently; but it was only apparent, for he was capable of close and constant application, and of persistent industry. His want of "go" had reference to public life only, or to any kind of public duty. The thought of going out into the open to meet the gaze of the multitude was repugnant to his temperament—I would not say to his feelings—because after the revelations of his career, no one would believe that he had any feeling whatever. It was this repugnance that led those who knew him to anticipate that in the witness-box he would flounder and fumble into all sorts of contradictions and admissions. They hardly expected that he would make such a shocking exhibition of himself. What they counted upon was, that after fencing and stumbling for a time, he would blurt out the whole truth, and throw himself upon the mercy of the court. This would have been in keeping with his character, as it was understood years ago. It was not imagined or

believed that for a day and a quarter he would have stood the raking fire of a terrible cross-examination. Had Pigott had the faintest notion of the crucial ordeal before him, all the money in the coffers of the *Times*—unscrupulous as he was—would not have induced him to go into the box. He had no conception of what was before him, much less had he any suspicion of the crushing evidence in Sir Charles Russell's hands.

THE FACE NO INDEX TO THE MIND.

I have said that Pigott would be classed amongst retiring men. Whatever was the cause, he did not care to move amongst the general public. A small circle of associates and the duties of his office sufficed to amuse and employ him. In his papers he was aggressive and offensive, but in a personal encounter he would rather let his coat go with his adversary than fight about it. Soft and easy pleasures succeeded to his daily work. He never seemed to be troubled by difficulties or anxieties, for his spirits were invariably buoyant and cheery. While he was planning and plotting to obtain money, no trace of the inner current of his thoughts could be discerned in his manner or in his conversation. There was never a change in his demeanour. Almost all his life he must have been engaged in working out plans to "raise the wind," but the shadow of an anxious or absorbing thought was never visible upon his bronzed and ruddy countenance.

The sharpest eye could detect no sign of internal anxiety upon the face, simply because it was not there. It was a perfect mask. The absence of conscience would not wholly account for the uniform happiness of such a man as Richard Pigott has painted himself, by his own hand, as Sir Charles Russell observed. Contentment sat smiling in every lineament of his oily face and bald, shining head. His conversation, never fluent, was habitually bland and balmy. All the time he must have been scheming, and devising ways and means of meeting the pressing needs of his wasteful extravagance.

NOT A GAMBLER.

To account for his eternal want of money, it may be asked, did he patronise the turf? I am quite sure he did not. He never, to my knowledge, had a visit from a book-maker, nor backed a horse with a solitary sovereign. His fancy did not lead him in the direction of the race-course. Nor did he speculate in stocks or shares.

HIS RECREATIONS.

The only manly recreations he had any affection for were yachting and swimming. He was a typical sea-dog. In build, and in the bronzed, tanned face, and general look of vigorous health, he might pass anywhere as a retired officer of the navy.

His "set" were the members of the Kingstown Model Yacht Club, of which Lord Muskerry was president.

Pigott was always a welcome visitor to the club, and on the sailing trips round the coast ; not that he was a wit, or a good story-teller, but because his frequent orders for grog or champagne all round made him a popular clubman. A boat timed to sail, say at three o'clock, would be detained half-an-hour by the skipper rather than go without "Dick." A friend of his has assured me that he set as little value upon a sovereign as upon a shilling.

They little suspected how the money so freely spent had been procured—at what risk, as we now know, to his liberty, and with what injury to innocent persons. For a man who was never off the edge of a precipice, never knowing the moment a police officer might tap him on the shoulder, announcing his arrest for swindling or forgery, his spirits were wonderfully light and airy. He was never observed in a gloomy mood ; a shadow of depression was never seen to cross his countenance. It was in the witness-box that for the first time he looked a serious and changed man. The lines of anxiety were furrowing his cheeks. He was dazed and stupified, for he was not long under the fierce fire of Sir Charles Russell when Pigott felt himself in the dock instead of a witness-box.

PIGOTT AT SEA.

As a swimmer Pigott was widely known along the line from Dublin to Bray. Twenty-five years ago he

often frightened the people of Dalkey by the distance he went from land, and by the length of time he remained in the water. When he took up his residence in Kingstown, about the year '68, the West Pier was familiar with his dumpy figure and sea-faring face. Winter and summer he was in the harbour, nearly every morning; in the daytime he frequently started off on the bay side of the pier, and swam out of sight.

With the aid of a binocular, one could see the shining bald pate, reflecting the shimmer of the hot, July sun. I have heard stories of people finding a suit of clothes (Pigott's) on the pier, and, seeing no one in the water, reported a drowning accident to the police. This happened more than once. "Here's old Neptune," the bathers used to say, when Pigott was observed stumping along reading his morning paper.

He seemed to have as much confidence in his security from drowning as he had in the safety of his forgeries. As he felt that he could not be drowned, so must he have been convinced that the world would never learn the secrets of his life.

PHYSICAL CONSTITUTION.

Pigott was favoured with a marvellous constitution. He abused his magnificent health, but it did not suffer from it. Upon other people imprudence will sooner or latter begin to exhibit its ravages, and finally claim its

conquest. But Pigott's constitution possessed a power of resistance which baffled indiscretion and excess.

He was by no means an habitual drunkard, nor a sot. He could take an enormous quantity of drink, or none at all. For three hours he could remain in the sea, and return to land without a shiver or a chill. If he retired to rest at night full of stimulants to the chin, he rose without even the inconvenience of a headache, and ate a hearty breakfast. A "pick-me-up" in the morning he never craved for, and never had recourse to it. In the daytime he drank nothing, never ate lunch, nor an afternoon meal of any kind. Until he left his office in the evening he tasted neither food nor liquor. He had no fixed hour for dinner. He might dine at six, or not until ten.

Although he had a large appetite, he took only two meals a day, and he could fast or eat, drink heavily or lightly. His health was not affected by indulgence or by abstinence. Neither from natural or unnatural cause was he ever sick. He was prematurely bald and grey, but his constitution remained invulnerable, and the day he stepped into the witness-box in London he looked fresh, vigorous and physically sound. His father lived to a very advanced age, and Richard Pigott might have run his span of life up to ninety years.

Swimming was his only exercise; otherwise he was inactive, walking little and leisurely, and seemingly averse to bodily exertion on land.

PIGOTT AT HOME.

At home or abroad, especially when he was amongst his social companions, Pigott was invariably genial, bland, and apparently a happy, contented man, free from care or anxiety. In his own house he was particularly affable, and in manner his two sisters were very like him. They were ever smiling and agreeable.

The few occasions upon which I had necessity to see Pigott at his house in Vesey Place, Kingstown, I found him surrounded by his friends and constant companions of the Yacht Club and the theatre. It was a house of hospitality: the decanter always on the table, and the invitation to stay and have dinner frequently repeated. His affection for his sisters, and his ready indulgence of their whims or wishes, were well known to his intimates. It appears, too, that he was a fond and kind father, taking great pleasure in the company of his children.

A CHANGE.

After Pigott sold his newspapers he made a sudden and entire change in his life. He cut all his companions, lived exclusively, and began to burrow, as we have learned, through old newspapers in search of material for attacks upon the National Party. Out of the *Irish World* chiefly he compiled "Parnellism Unmasked," and sold it to the enemies and libellers of the Irish nation.

A NEW ROLE.

Having parted with the *Irishman*, he felt that it was no longer his interest or his profession to wear the mask of a Nationalist. His rôle now was to pose in the opposite direction. He grubbed and scavenged for the "Loyal and Patriotic Union," the gentlemen of that party eagerly purchasing from him all the rubbish he could supply them with. They took no trouble to inquire into the truth or falsehood of Pigott's information. It was enough for their purpose that it had the appearance of damning veracity. Their sole object was to discredit and disgrace political opponents, and destroy the hopes of a nation. Behind Pigott were masked Ministers of the Crown, statesmen, in and out of office, noble lords and gentlemen, upon whom rests a moral responsibility, greater perhaps than history will attach to the unhappy victim of their tempting bribes.

Pigott's patrons and paymasters were men of rank and position, highly placed in public estimation, claiming to represent the wealth, education, and honesty of the country to which they respectively belonged. They paid large sums of money for Pigott's calumnies and concoctions, subscribing hundreds to keep his outrage factory working at high pressure speed.

When the slanders of the "Black Pamphlet" were scrutinised, the authorship was attributed to Pigott. The Irish leaders, who were vilified in "Parnellism

Unmasked," were silent, but there was an eye upon Pigott's movements. His prosperous appearance, and his frequent flittings between Dublin and London, were not unnoticed. He lived a life of isolation and reserve; saw none of his former intimates; and if he happened to meet one of them, he passed him by with a glower of hatred peculiar to his latter-day manner.

Everyone with whom he had been acquainted seemed to have become his enemy. He looked a modern Ishmael—his hand against every man; his sullen demeanour clearly indicating that public suspicion was dogging his footsteps.

WAS PIGOTT A NATIONALIST?

Before the revelations in the London Commission Court, it might have been thought by many people that at one period of his life Pigott had been a Nationalist. Since the disclosures came to light, it seems absurd to discuss the question, whether he ever had any sympathy with national movements, or any practical connection with national parties.

When he was proprietor of the *Irishman*, it was naturally assumed that, being responsible for its direction, and for its political views, he must have believed in its principles and purpose. But, it should be borne in mind, that his ownership of the paper was the result of an accident, a turn of good fortune that came upon

Pigott with surprise. In the hands of Mr. P. J. Smyth it was moderately National. After the suppression of the *Irish People*, and stimulated by the exciting events which followed and continued for some years, it was plainly the interest of the *Irishman* to fall in with the times, and write up to the level which the excitement demanded.

The national temperature rose to fever heat, and presumably Pigott may have felt the warmth of the atmosphere in which he worked. But beyond a sort of mechanical assimilation (if the expression is allowable) to surrounding elements, Pigott never exhibited any but a business interest in politics.

In his direct examination by the Attorney-General, he swore that he had once attended a meeting of the Supreme Council. This was absolutely untrue—one of his ready inventions, expressly fabricated to give weight and authority to subsequent perjuries. He had to show that he was an accredited Fenian in order to frame a plausible story as to the way in which he came by the forged letters.

As a matter of fact, Pigott took no part whatever in politics, secret or open, at any period of his life. And he knew nothing about revolutionary parties, save what he might have suspected or inferred from the circumstances of his position. He had no more information than any other reader of the Irish and Irish-American press. It was necessary to make this clear,

because some Unionist journals are now throwing Pigott over upon the National party, and pharasaically thanking Providence that he was not one of themselves. The Unionists—the gentlemen who claim a monopoly of all the public and private virtues—were delighted to make use of Pigott's fabrications and forgeries; but the moment his plans and theirs collapse together, they try to fix the stain of his iniquities upon the party to which Pigott, in furtherance of his own ends, pretended he belonged.

PIGOTT AS A HISTORIAN.

In '82 Pigott published a historical review of public movements since O'Connell's agitation for Repeal of the Union. The narrative was compiled from newspapers and pamphlets which came into his possession during his connection with the National Press; and were it not spoiled by personal acerbities, and by a shrewd mixture of colours to please the eye of Mr. W. E. Forster, it would be a useful summary of the Irish struggle from '48 to '81.

The main facts of the various movements, secret or open, are stated with more or less accuracy; but the opinions and conclusions with which the history is liberally interlarded, and his virulent attacks upon the Land League and its leaders, stamp it with the hall mark of an I.L.P.U. pamphlet of large dimensions. The endeavour to write a book which would give him a

claim upon the Liberal Government of the period, and which, at the same time, would not glaringly violate the proprieties of history, was a difficult task, in which he did not succeed. Contradictions, especially in his views and inferences, are thickly strewn in every chapter.

The same infirmity, arising from defective memory, or from ever-changing plans of obtaining loans or grants of money, was observed in his voluminous correspondence with Mr. Forster, Archbishop Walsh, Mr. Egan, and others. In his letter-writing he paid no attention to consistency in the make-up of his stories. This weak point in his character adhered to him in the witness-box, where one absurd explanation was followed by another and another, until he was lost in the confusion of his own inventions.

In the preface to his book he offers his unpretending narrative as an apology for his life—wasted, perhaps, but “not altogether a lost life.” He had nothing to regret, no omission to make good. He was neither a penitent, a pervert, nor a convert. Yet, in the next sentence, he proceeds to state that he is a convert; that he writes the book to vindicate his motives, and to explain why it was that his political opinions had “undergone a marked change.” He desired to see his country contented and prosperous, and its people happy. The way those blessings could be attained was quite plain to him; and he adds—“I don’t hesitate to advocate it,

notwithstanding that it is a complete reversal of former methods." His conversion to a loyal policy—though he had nothing to regret or recall, while admitting that he had made mistakes—took place when he ceased to be proprietor of a National newspaper. It was then it became his desire to make clear his reasons for conceiving that "the time had arrived for Ireland to make a new departure, and that in the direction of reconciliation to England, with self-government still steadily in view."

CONTRADICTIONS.

These professions are curious reading to-day, when the world is in full possession of the awful means he adopted to prevent reconciliation, and to destroy, for ever, perhaps, his nation's hopes of self-government. He desired to see his country contented and prosperous, and its people happy. The way was plain, he said, to attain those blessings, and he did not hesitate to advocate it. This was his profession of political faith in 1882. How he put his principle in practice between 1886 and 1888 it is unnecessary to show. No man ever went so near accomplishing the ruin of his country. He caused guiltless men to be branded and pilloried as murderers, and precipitated a crisis unprecedented in the history of Great Britain and Ireland.

PIGOTT ON PROFESSING PATRIOTS.

As bearing upon his own professions of patriotism, and his subsequent career as forger, informer, and moral

assassin, his frequently expressed contempt for sham patriots and informers is interesting reading. He finds it hard to speak a good word even for the '48 men. They were visionary fools. Mitchel was an incendiary writer, an absurd revolutionist. They all made a brave show, but when the pinch came, they "displayed a meek submission to the powers that be." Their quarrels are a delightful theme for his pen to dwell upon. There were, he says, wigs on the green when the *Nation* and Fullam's *Irishman* fell out. Of Frederick Lucas alone he wrote kindly. But, then, he was hampered by professing "patriots whose patriotism was of the pocket; who were only too happy to have a country to sell, and sold it."

HIS ABHORRENCE OF TRAITORS.

The virtuous denunciation of such persons came from Pigott with unusual frankness. "The swindler, Sadleir, (whose example in committing suicide Pigott follows), and the traitor Keogh" are given prominent places in his gallery of villains. "Sadleir," he wrote, "was a clever intriguer, a financial swindler, and an utterly unscrupulous politician. He had unlimited command of money, and used it to secure the return for Irish constituencies of those of his own friends whom he could use to further his designs. The story of his betrayal of the Irish cause; his appointment as Junior Lord of the Treasury; the stoppage of the Tipperary

Bank, and the discovery of his enormous frauds; his wretched suicide, and the flight of his accomplices; the appointment of his most trusted follower, William Keogh, as Solicitor-General, and his subsequent elevation to the bench;—all this is so familiar to even the present generation that it is not necessary I should further dwell upon it.”

Nevertheless, it is probable that the historian did dwell upon the career of such as Sadleir. Frederick Lucas, whom he eulogised warmly, was not his model of probity and patriotism. This is Pigott’s tribute to the memory of Lucas :

“A kinder-hearted, more generous, more honourable, more honest, or more lovable man one does not often meet. To know Lucas, indeed, was to love him as a man, as a true patriot, as a pure humanitarian, with sympathies for suffering humanity boundless as the limitless ocean.”

OMINOUS WORDS.

Happy would it have been for the unfortunate suicide of Madrid, had the character of Lucas impressed itself upon the heart of Pigott, and become the model and guide of his life. As a writer recently observed : “Pigott in his youth was surrounded by the purest and best Irishmen of the last generation. He was in turn employed in the offices of the *Tablet*, the *Nation*, Fullam’s *Irishman*, and the *Tribune*. In those

situations he had opportunities of knowing Davis, Duffy, Dillon, Meagher, Smith O'Brien, and the rest of the noble band who lived stainless lives, rendering unselfish service to their native land. The atmosphere he moved in was vitiated only by such elements as emanated from a very few persons, Sadleir chiefly. And it was for the vicious elements alone that his moral system seemed to have affinity. Judge Keogh he condemns for perjury. Sadleir he denounces as a swindler, and makes passing allusion to his "wretched suicide." Perjury, swindling, suicide! Ominous words to read now in Pigott's publication of 1882.

But he is not done with sham patriots, traitors, and rogues. It is singular to note how careful he is to give unworthy people their deserts, the most worthy people, if he had any grudge against them, getting a lashing for their foibles or their (in his opinion) interested patriotism. For what reason, I cannot conjecture, he is severe upon the Young Irelanders, who, he says, were demoralised after their failure. He states that blank despair seized upon most of them; but he goes further than this, further than he was warranted in point of fact. "It is (he writes) deplorably true that only too many of them were anxious to purchase immunity for themselves by the betrayal of their associates." The '48 movement was not an oath-bound conspiracy. The leaders made open declaration of war, in their papers and in their speeches. There was nothing for anyone

to betray, nothing to sell which was either new or unknown to the Government.

PIGOTT ON CORYDON AND NAGLE.

When Pigott comes to deal with Nagle and Corydon he is on more solid ground. He is quite pleased to relate that Nagle was a pious person, and in every way so upright and virtuous that he was selected by the Catholic clergymen of St. Laurence O'Toole's Church to fill the office of clerk. If Nagle wore scapulars, as did Pigott himself, he probably would have related the fact with as much unction as he referred to Sadleir's swindling and suicide.

The rôle of Corydon and his private character were good subjects for Mr. Pigott's portrait-painting. "Corydon was a man of confessedly bad character and profligate habits. He was a professional swearer—one who relishes the crime of bearing false witness against his neighbour." How strange, that such a man should be marked out by Mr. Pigott for especial abhorrence. Pigott's book is almost a history of swindlers, suicides, informers, and traitors. From amongst the men of his time he carefully picks them out, and spares none of them. As he was never considered a humourist, his desire to delineate characters whom, in many respects, he adopted as his exemplars, it is not easy to comprehend.

The full force of his wrath is reserved for the pro-

minent leaders of the Land League. But before he comes seriously to distribute his censure amongst the men whose names he forged to incriminating concoctions, he takes several opportunities of sneering at Mr. John O'Leary and the late A. M. Sullivan. With the latter he had a prolonged public quarrel, the origin of which, as I have already stated, I do not know. But as Pigott was jealous and envious, the dispute may probably be accounted for on these grounds. His unfriendliness towards Mr. O'Leary is otherwise accounted for. He knew that Mr. O'Leary disliked and distrusted him, and dislike begets dislike. So, in several pages of his book, Pigott was quite happy to have a fling at the two gentlemen whom he pretty warmly hated.

SHOCKED AT SINNERS.

Mr. Pigott was particularly shocked at the dishonesty of the Land Leaguers, and he shows in his book that he was always very angry on account of Mr. Patrick Egan's administration of the affairs of the League. His constant complaint was, that the League would not give the public any satisfaction as to how the funds were spent. He could not possibly comprehend the simplicity of the Irish in America, sending thousands weekly to obscure persons, and never hearing any more about their money. So much infatuation existed amongst the innocent Irish in the United States, that

he seemed to think there was no hope for so gullible a people. At all times he saw unscrupulous persons trading in Irish politics, but that class of able dealers were never so numerous as they became after he had cut his connection with national journalism. It seemed to him that the Irish political world had gone wrong.

THE *TIMES*.

At page 86 of Pigott's book there is an extract from the *Times*, which, in the light of recent occurrences, is rather strange reading. I have pointed out how Pigott was careful to expose swindlers and perjurers; and here he disapproves of offering rewards for information, and quotes the *Times* in support of his views. The *Times'* article was written upon Lord Naas's proclamation, in 1858, offering a reward of £100 for the conviction of any person guilty of administering an oath. Pigott's comment, which is also significant, was this—"The issue of this document created some sensation; it was so manifestly calculated to create the offences it proposed to prevent—that is, to tempt unscrupulous men to invent conspiracies in order to obtain money for betraying the imaginary conspirators—that it startled even the London *Times* out of its always eager anxiety to promote repression in Ireland." Pigott here intimates that the demand would produce the supply. What would Mr. Houston say upon this point? As he seems to have understood the economic principles of supply and demand his opinion would be valuable. He told Pigott he

would purchase incriminatory documents, and, of course, Pigott was able to find them.

The criticism of the *Times* on the proclamation issued by Lord Naas is quoted by Pigott as follows :—

When a reward is offered for a crime which may not have been committed at all at the time of the proclamation the case is naturally altered. The reward may be the very cause of the crime, or of the false accusation of committing it; an unnatural stimulus is administered to the disreputable occupation of spies and informers, and a principle is laid down which, if logically carried out, would teach the people at large to consider the detection of crime, not as a duty thrown by the very structure and constitution of society upon each individual member of it, but as a lucrative secret, to be sold in the dearest market for the best price that can be obtained from the Government of the day.

I refrain from italicising the sentences of the foregoing paragraph which will naturally strike the reader as particularly applicable to the action of the *Times* in getting up evidence to prove Mr. Parnell and his colleagues murderers and associates of murderers. The *Times* went infinitely further in doing what it had condemned in Lord Naas's proclamation. It wanted incriminating documents, for which it paid large sums of money, and asked no questions as to whom or where they came from. It was satisfied with the "legal value" of the forged letters. That was quite sufficient for their purpose.

NOT A FENIAN.

When Pigott swore at the Commission that he had been a Fenian, no credence was attached to his testimony.

The general public had no means of testing veracity on that point, and those who had some knowledge of his past life did not believe. But as in all his private affairs he was so remarkably secret and reticent, it was thought possible that he might have been connected at one time or another with the Fenian body. Few people having read his experiences as an Irish journalist—this volume in which is plainly written so much of his own character—it was not known that in two different chapters he disclaims all connection with the organisation with whose inner mind he pretended to be intimate. At page 278 he writes:—"Though not an enrolled Fenian, I supported the Fenian policy." It was a matter of business, as it was upon that policy his papers lived. But he had no politics of any hue. His associates were persons of no political principles; or, if they had any, they were Conservative. In another part of his book he incidentally repeats the avowal that he had not been in any way connected with the Fenian organisation. So that when he swore to the court in London that he had been a Fenian, and had attended a meeting of the Supreme Council, he did not speak the truth. But he found it necessary to make oath to that effect in order to give weight to the rest of his fictions.

THE RULING PASSION.

Money, money, more money, was Richard Pigott's never satisfied, never ceasing demand. He should get

money somehow or somewhere. He wrote to Mr. Patrick Egan, in 1881, when he fabricated the offer from the Castle to publish Land League accounts, for the sum of £500. The last deed, but one, of his life was an appeal by telegraph to "Shannon, London," for more money. An incautious, imprudent telegram. It disclosed his whereabouts, led to his arrest, and then—suicide. Thus ended a life of shame—a career of crime without precedent or parallel.

STRANGER THAN FICTION.

Truth is, indeed, stranger than fiction. The novelist who should delineate such a character would be charged with violating even the possibilities of human depravity. Richard Pigott, pictured by himself, was such a man that were his portrait drawn by any but his own hand, the likeness would be rejected, by common consent, as utterly absurd and incredible.

THE WAGES OF SIN.

In the annals of Newgate there is no record of any criminal of Richard Pigott's stamp. His figure in history is unique. In the temple of notoriety he occupies a niche which will be all his own. Born to good luck, he abused his favourable opportunities; lived in his later years by moral assassination, and died by his own hand. "The wages of sin is death."



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